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Tips for Teaching Alphabet Recognition

Research has shown that children who can recognize letters of the alphabet have an easier time learning to make connections between the letters and the sounds they stand for. Children need to memorize the letter names, and they can do this through direct instruction along with many exposures to the letters in print. Practice with writing the letters is a proven method for building and reinforcing letter recognition. Here are some activities for helping children develop their alphabet recognition skills.

- ☐ Teach letter names before children learn the sounds with which they are associated. Teach the child the alphabet song (provided in the Reading-tutors tutor teaching tips lesson) and sing it daily. Point to the letters of the alphabet as you sing the song with the child.
- ☐ Provide the letters in different forms: printed on cards, cut out from pieces of fabric, especially felt or fuzzy materials, or cut out from materials such as sandpaper or Styrofoam. Have the child trace the letter with her or his finger as she or he says the letter name.
- ☐ Have the child make the letter out of clay, pipe cleaners, finger paint, or form the letter with her or his body.
- ☐ Teach the child the letters of her or his name.
- ☐ Some pairs of letters are easily confused. It is best to avoid teaching them together. Allow enough time for the child to learn one letter before introducing the other letter.

These pairs include:

lowercase: b-d, m-n, m-w, g-p, g-q, n-u, p-q, u-v, v-w, f-t, c-o, b-p, c-e, a-o, b-h, h-n, i-j, i-l, and v-y

uppercase: C-G, O-Q, I-L, M-N, M-W, K-X, C-G, E-F, U-V, V-Y, D-O, and P-R.

- ☐ Young children often find letters in the following groups confusing. These letters should not be taught at the same time.

e, a, s, c, o

b, d, p, o, g, h

f, l, t, k, i

n, m, u, h, r

- ☐ Provide practice in writing the letters. Let the child write the letters on unlined paper first. Students can use paint or finger paint or pencils. Reading-tutors.com provides letter writing practice pages for the child in the two most common letter-writing styles: Zaner-Bloser and D'Nealian. Be consistent, and use only one style of writing.
- ☐ Write a series of words on a piece of paper, for example, *box, ran, back, fan, boy*. Ask the child to circle all the words that begin with a letter, in this case, the letter *b*.
- ☐ Select a letter for the day and write it on a large sheet of cardstock. Have the child cut out words from old magazines that start with that letter. The child can also add her or his drawings of things that start with that letter.

Tips for Teaching **Alphabet Recognition** *(continued)*

- ❑ There are many trade and library alphabet books available. Read a variety of these books to the child and help her or him find things in the pictures on the pages that start with the different letters. Encourage the child to use the alphabet books as models to create her or his own alphabet book, for example, an A to Z book about animals.
- ❑ There are many games you can play to reinforce letter recognition. Reading-tutors.com provides letter cards for games and activities. Here are a few activities you can do using letter cards:
 1. Use the letter cards to spell the child's name. Have the child spell her or his name, saying the letter names. Then scramble the letters and ask the child to unscramble the letters to spell her or his name.
 2. Spread out letter cards with lowercase and uppercase letters on the table. Ask the child to pair the uppercase letters with the lowercase letters. Add a timing element to make the game more challenging.
 3. Give the child letter cards and have her or him place the cards in alphabetical order.
 4. Make two sets of a selection of different letter cards (about 16 to 20 cards, or 8 to 10 different letters). Spread them face down on the table. Have the child turn over two cards and say the letter names. If the letters are the same, the child can keep the letter cards.
 5. Place a deck of letter cards face down. Have the child draw a letter card, name the letter and, if correct, move along a game board. Reading-tutors.com provides game boards to use.
 6. Print a selection of letters in a 4x4 grid on cards to make bingo cards. Have the child draw a letter from the stack and read it. Players get to cover the letter on their bingo card if it appears on their card.